

## Polyester Culture: The U.S. Army's Aversion to Broadening Assignments

by

Colonel Thomas D. Boccardi  
United States Army



United States Army War College  
Class of 2012

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**POLYESTER CULTURE: THE U.S. ARMY'S AVERSION TO  
BROADENING ASSIGNMENTS**

by

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United States Army

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This CRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Senior Service College fellowship.

The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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## **ABSTRACT**

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## POLYESTER CULTURE: THE U.S. ARMY'S AVERSION TO BROADENING ASSIGNMENTS

Lemming is a crony...He is a superb Division commander – for the infantry or armored infantry war in Europe in 1940s. He fights in Vietnam using the methods that would have made him a successful and popular commander with his superiors and with the public in World War II...the most important generals of the modern West have almost always had efficient and responsive staffs. Lemming's was no exception. There is much sycophantism, of course. Those who are sycophants fancy they are not. They will innovate within the "parameters" which their experience with Lemming tells them are the final limits of accepted innovation.<sup>1</sup>

- Josiah Bunting  
The Lionheads

### INTRODUCTION

The legacy of Vietnam resides, deeply, inside today's U.S. Army. While Doctrine, Practice and Technology are incomparably distant between the two eras, there remains a unifying principle – Culture. The Vietnam War manifested a cleavage between the Army and the social order it belonged. As observed by Russell Weigley, the American Military Historian, the course of Vietnam was the single most important cause of turbulence for America's Army. The manner in which it was fought generated "profound misgivings." The U.S. Government speculated upon the erosion of tactical, operational and strategic skills, more importantly, the American people questioned the Army's faithfulness to the well-established set of national values. "Trust" in the U.S. Army was lost by those whom mattered the most.<sup>2</sup>

In order to restore its stature as a Profession, the Army cut its umbilical cord to its source of power - manpower. The historic Jamestown design of a citizen's obligation to compulsory military service was eliminated.<sup>3</sup> The adoption of an All-Volunteer Force (AVF) was principally due to societal disaffection and the resulting loss of discipline,

however General Westmoreland realized the AVF alone would not reestablish legitimacy in the Profession of Arms. His directed study on Professionalism in the Officer Corps found that Army Culture was out of balance. Junior officer's expressed their frustration with the pressures of the system, disheartened by seniors who "sacrificed integrity on the altar of personal success" and impatient with the perceived "preoccupation with insignificant statistics." Army Culture drifted from its reliable character of values-based selflessness to a McNamara-esque system of quantitative results - rewarding those whose service was near the flagpole and only "temporarily visiting" assignments with troops. This culture reinforced a polyester business-suit cronyism. Seeking to reverse the Polyester Culture, Westmoreland directly implemented measures that centralized selection of battalion and brigade commanders and established developmental time periods that corresponded with promotion. The 'Muddy-boots culture' was reborn and resides today's Army.<sup>4</sup>

Over the past ten years of continuous combat, the Army has proven itself as an organization that is both adaptive and innovative. It invented technology, composed new doctrine, modernized its structure and generated new processes to fight and win against emergent threats. The U.S. Army cast itself as the most seasoned, deployable and lethal land force in the world, yet its culture is resistant to adopt changes that inhibit its core service parochialism. The prolonged conflict reintroduces a strategic question by some members of congress and has peaked some national interest – should we resume the draft to not only provide more military manpower but to ensure that all social and economic classes share risk and responsibility for national service? The proposition argues that the Army embeds values, discipline, and a sense of service to the social order to which it

belongs. All of which could be argued are incomparably distant from today's 'Millennial Generation' and the former 'Greatest Generation' that endured the last global Conflict, hence the notion of selfless-service could be nurtured from mandatory-service.

The Army is particularly resistant to accept this proposition. In fact, all strategic communications from Army leaders indicate the intent "to sustain the a high-quality All-Volunteer Army."<sup>5</sup> The reasoning is simple - volunteerism is the key element in maintaining the Army as a Profession. In a 2010 Speech at Duke University, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates eloquently raises the contradiction by noting the "extraordinary success of military professionalism" comes at two considerable costs: "it is expensive" and "there's a greater cultural, social cost of civilian-military alienation." Secretary Gates captures the risk of the 'muddy-boots culture' as the "risk over time of developing a cadre of military leaders that politically, culturally, and geographically that have less and less in common with the people they have sworn to defend."<sup>6</sup>

This study does not seek to answer the AVF paradox. It assumes the Army understands the "risk" noted by the former Secretary of Defense and knows it must mitigate this risk. Under the auspices of change, which are: an impending drawdown, an era of fiscal restraint, and a new strategy that excludes the probability of large-scale stability operations, the Army must manage the reduction in end-strength of 80,000 soldiers to include eight to thirteen Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs).<sup>7</sup> These changes threaten retention of the Army's professional investment of talent. Therefore, the primary research question for this study is: **Why have career development practices for U.S. Army officers not been optimized to balance breadth and depth of experience despite recent wartime pressures and post-conflict drawdown?**

Failing to achieve its organizational purpose was the forcing mechanism for the Army to change post-Vietnam. The Army had undergone organizational learning, but how did it change? More importantly, how has that change preserved itself for over 40 years? The ‘Muddy-boots’ culture has endured through major changes in the security environment, doctrine, technology and leadership. A half century wave-top review reveals the Army’s ability to endure turbulence without losing its central identity: two drawdown’s, a decade of modernization, multiple small and large scale contingency operations, a decade of Peacekeeping Operations, a major structural transformation and the last decade of persistent conflict. The legacy of Vietnam exhibits how culture can act as either an inhibitor or an enabler to successful innovation.<sup>8</sup>

This study asserts that culture plays a significant role in organizational learning. As mentioned above, change is imminent for today’s Army and central to success will be its ability to preserve the “Civil-Military Trust.” Recognizing the gains over the last decade as well as the manifested tensions within its professional culture, the Army Profession Campaign seeks to reassess itself as a Profession of Arms. Similar to Westmorland’s study, the Army is aware of the expanding gap in espoused and in-use practices within the profession. These tensions were noted among subordinate’s members looking up at their senior leaders. Evidence of tensions were detected before the 9/11 attack, but some are exacerbated by the war, in particular the argument between industrial-age personnel systems vs. the talent needs of the future Army, while others resulted from institutional adaptation during the extended conflict.<sup>9</sup> The Army’s challenge is to build experiential capital through broadening experiences - experiences

that are outside the ‘muddy-boots culture’, which enable an Army returning from War to reintegrate into the social order to which it belongs.

Secretary Gates frames the puzzle in his speech at the US Military Academy (West Point), “how the Army can adapt its practices and culture...it is incumbent on the Army to promote – in every sense of the word – these choices and experiences for its next generation of leaders.” The Army has proven its ability to adapt and innovate; yet it cannot do so with its personnel practices. Secretary Gates complements the puzzle frame with the direct target – “How can the Army can break-up the institutional concrete, its bureaucratic rigidity in its assignments and promotion processes, in order to retain, challenge, and inspire its best, brightest, and most-battled tested young officers to lead the service in the future?”<sup>10</sup> The research intends to solve this puzzle by determining if a short-term bridging strategy comprised of small fixes can gain organizational momentum to close the cleavage and if the innovation of a Talent Management System will yield an investment in a bench of strategic leaders.

By answering the research question this study will attempt to advance literature regarding how militaries learn, adapt and change and in a broader perspective how culture affects organizational learning. Through a focused-review of relevant literature on military innovation and a comparison of current wartime pathologies in officer development, I will attempt to examine a puzzle that finds the U.S. Army as an adaptable learning organization during wartime, nevertheless an organization that safeguards certain core practices during war and continues to remain resistant to modify practices during post-conflict even though change is imminent. In order to best answer the research question, I propose four hypotheses that will constitute a framework in examining this

puzzle. Their purpose is to connect the relevant theories to the evidence and provide a better understanding of the relationship between culture and change.

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** If the Vision of Senior Military Leaders requires Army officer's to possess Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational experience, then officer's assignments will change to incorporate more Joint Officer Management experience as part of Joint Force 2020.

**Hypothesis 2:** If Army Doctrine prescribes broadening experience as a prerequisite for promotion then Army officers will adopt the experiential gains of non-operational assignments.

**Hypothesis 3:** If Army officer boards changed their Promotion/Selection Practices to reward officers who met the espoused needs of the Army's Strategic Leadership and Doctrine, then Army officers would adapt their career development to meet those needs.

**Hypothesis 4:** If the Army officer corps internalizes the need for change, then the "Muddy-boots" Culture will adjust and integrate career developmental practices that balance breadth and depth of experience.

This study of organizational learning is comprised a four-parts: examine the evidence, review existing explanations, identify emergent theory, and present proposals. First, we will examine the pathologies within the Army's current practice post-transformation to a BCT-Centric Army, as well as the Army's institutional adaptation to meet the needs of an insatiable wartime environment. The legacy of war intensified

existing trends of the ‘Muddy-boots’ culture and heavily skewed professional traits and behaviors among its officer corps. In the second part of this study, we will review academic theories of military innovation. Attempting to answer three central questions: (1) Why do militaries innovate; (2) How do they learn; (3) Who is responsible for learning? This study will review the current field of literature regarding military innovation - past and contemporary, identifying key variables, salient theory and gaps in the current field of analysis. I will then assert an emerging theory of ‘Complementary Effects’ that enable organizational change. The final part of this study provides options for a short-term bridging strategy comprised of small fixes to gain organizational momentum for innovation, as well as a long-term strategy for investment into broadening experience.

## **EVIDENCE – MUDDY BOOTS GET MUDDIER**

Over the last decade, the Army transformed by changing its structure, it’s processes, its doctrine, and its technology. The pre-war Army is a shadow of its current condition, however the Army has retained, even intensified, its long-standing culture. The first part of this study will examine the pathologies within the Army’s current practice after it transformed into a BCT-Centric Army, subsequently enduring major changes under institutional adaptation and the insatiable requirements of a wartime environment.

Recognizing the Army was “out of balance” in early 2009, the Secretary of the Army established ‘institutional adaptation’ to “more effectively and efficiently deliver trained and ready forces that are capable of meeting the needs of the commanders.”<sup>11</sup> Existing systems were stressed and resources were stretched, so the Army modified its

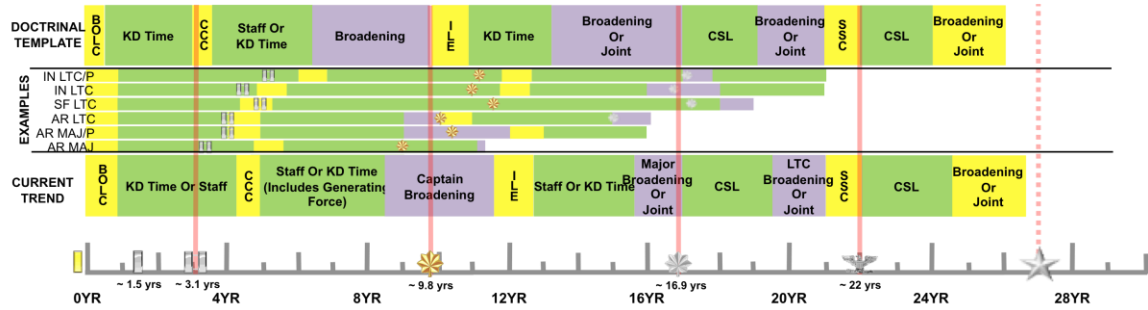
practices to meet the needs of the insatiable wartime environment. Under institutional adaptation, the primary purpose of personnel systems was to optimize and synchronize the resource of Soldiers to the operational Army. Transformation changed the distribution of officers to BCT-centric growth and created a structural shortfall for field grade officers. The increase of theater requirements compounded the problem. Out of necessity, the Army focused on resourcing the BCT-centric structure. Adverse trends, such as school backlogs, lack of broadening experience, and personnel turbulence emerged as officers continued to recycle into combat. To fill the gap, the Army executed two measures: accelerating promotion windows and elevating officer promotion selection rates. These measures coupled with the newly implemented practices of universal attendance by majors to Intermediate Level Education (ILE) and the removal of numerical stratification for company grade Officer Evaluation Reports (OERs), created a younger officer who progressed through diluted competition.<sup>12</sup>

To its credit, the Army's leadership prevented the institution from breaking, however the resulting defects, or pathologies, from institutional adaptation intensified cultural parochialism and triviality of broadening experience. Current Force-stabilization strategies subjugate officer developmental time, which inhibits the Officer Personnel Management System's (OPMS) ability to architect career development. The inherent defects preventing the function of talent management are: 1) the lack of standardized doctrine, 2) lack of consistent practice, and 3) "muddy-boots" culture influence in career development.<sup>13</sup> In order to observe these defects, I will explain the emerging trends within our officer corps after 10 years of conflict, and then outline the implications should the system remain unchanged.

## **The Legacy of War and Emerging Trends**

The wartime environment's insatiable personnel demands created a divergence between current theater needs and future developmental wants. For short-term survival, BCT-centric assignments became emphasized at the expense of education and broadening assignments, thus eviscerating critical windows of officer developmental timelines (Figure 1). Educational backlogs grew for majors and lieutenant colonels by 30-40% per Year Group (YG) and educational broadening programs, such as Fellowships and Scholarships, suffered as fewer officers applied for these programs.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Joint duty became de-emphasized; nearly half of Infantry/Armor General Officers served their first Joint assignment after brigade command (Figure 2).<sup>15</sup> Current statistics for Joint-qualified maneuver field grades demonstrates the decline: colonels less than 33%, lieutenant colonels less than 5%, and majors less than 1%.<sup>16</sup> To further illustrate (Figure 3), the Joint Staff is manned with roughly 50% of its statutory requirement for Infantry Officers.<sup>17</sup> Army doctrine does not provide a suitable frame of reference for Joint assignments in developmental models. Each Career branch defines key and developmental assignments as it relates to their respective branch, but fails to define broadening assignments, let alone a logical assignment sequence. Consequently, officers become fixated on five career assignments: platoon leader, company command, operations/executive officer, battalion command, and brigade command. Officers believe that all other duty assignments are of less value and place them at risk for selection.

Figure 1 (Developmental Timeline Shift)

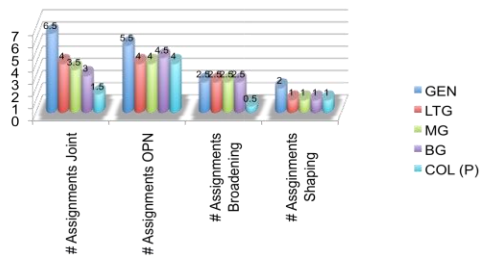


In Figure 1, the doctrinal developmental timeline is represented along the top column. Doctrine affords one broadening opportunity per grade-plate. Six selected files of officers from various maneuver branches demonstrate the decrease of broadening opportunity and the overall attenuation of developmental time.

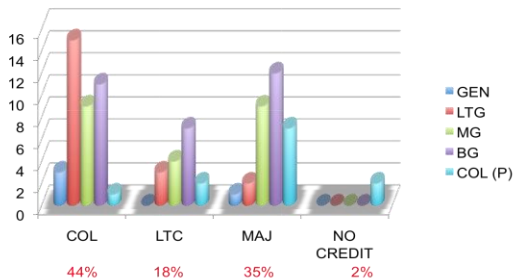
Figure 2 (Strategic Leader Data Set)

## Strategic Leader: Comparative Analysis

### Strategic Leader (SL) Assignments

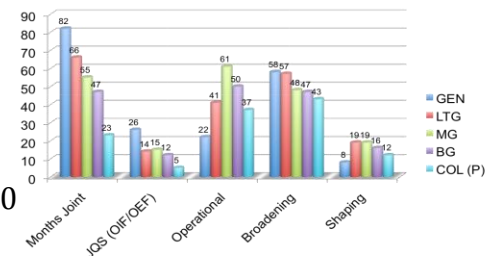


### Grades for Joint Credit



- Assignments (# and Type)
  - # of Joint assignments increments from 2x per grade plate after COL/P
  - COL/P have 1/5 Joint vs 4 OPN Assignments, less broadened, Entry level exp at floor
  - #1 Common Shaping assignment was Aide, XO, SMA to a Higher General officer
- Joint Targets (Grades vs Time)
  - Army Joint Time Avg in Months is at Floor (36mo)
  - Nearly 1/3 of all GOs Begin Joint Qual after BCT CMD, still have COL/Ps w/o Joint
  - #1 Common Joint assignment was Aide, XO, SMA or JSOC
- Hard Math (Where the months are)
  - Most Joint is Forward in Combat Theater Structure
  - Avg Months Joint for COL/Ps is 23 (Entry at Floor w/COS Take-out)
  - JQS constitutes 25% of Total Months
  - Operational Tours outweigh Joint Tours until LTG (A typical DIV CDR has more OPN than Joint)
- Commonalities
  - LTG (14/20 x Shaping Assignments), MG (16/22 x Shaping Assignments), BG (20/30 Shaping Assignments), COL/P (8/12 Shaping Assignments)

### SL Data (Months)



In Figure 2, the strategic leader assignment histories of Infantry and Armor General Officers indicates that broadening assignments are delayed until post-brigade command approximately after the 24<sup>th</sup> year of service. Subsequently, Joint assignments grow rapidly doubling each promotion. Operational assignments (combat theater assignments) remain consistently high.

Figure 3 (Statutory directed Joint Duty Authorized Assignments)

Joint Staff (Maneuver Branch) Micro-Model				
BRANCH	AUTH JDAL	JDAL FILL	JDAL VACANT	% FILL
IN	41	24	-17	58
AR	15	11	-4	73
FA	33	25	-8	75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>67</b>

In Figure 3, the current fill rate among maneuver branches for statutory authorizations as prescribed by Title X is noticeably short considering all BCTs deploy to theater at 100% of authorizations. In closer review of the Major grade-plate fill among all branches only 25% are filled (14 of the 55 Authorized).<sup>18</sup> This is inconsistent with United States Code, Title X, Section 661, in which the Secretary of Defense will ensure that one-half (50%) of Joint Duty Authorized List (JDAL) positions in the grade of major and above are filled to ensure Joint Matters.

Under the current trends, the belief that all other duty assignments are of less value is correct. The legacy of war intensified an existing cultural trend of muddy-boots

experiences skewing selection practices in favor of combat-centric assignments. Over the last two years all Infantry battalion commander-selects averaged 36 months in key developmental assignments as a major and 36 months as a captain, with just fewer than 4% having a Joint duty assignment. Few had any assignment outside of the BCT; in fact, the most common broadening assignment was aide-de-camp. The scope of time demonstrates the disparity, as officers in each grade-plate served upwards of 80% of their developmental time within the BCT. Not only did gravity pull towards BCT-Centric assignments, but their performance measures escalated as well. Officers selected early for promotion, or “Below the Zone,” comprised 40-50% of the command-selects. Less than 10% of the officers ever received an average evaluation report. BCT-Centric assignments became a valuable commodity for selection, hence older YGs failed to rotate out of the BCT. The resulting effect prevented an opportunity for junior officers to move up. In some cases 25-30% of older YGs were blockage in company command and brigade level staffs. The board selection practices emphasized the cleavage between tactical and broadening value.<sup>19</sup>

The rise in value of tactical assignments sponsors the “muddy-boots” culture. For instance, the Officer Record Brief (ORB) is the officer’s résumé to the Army (Figure 4). The top-left corner of the brief lists the officers combat experience, a fortuitous location considering how western society reads, as it enables a reader to quickly ascertain the officer’s ‘combat-currency,’ thereby relevancy of their merit. Assignment histories are devoid of importance prior to war. Their recent devolution decouples the link between assignment histories and performance evaluations. A developing trend influencing ORBs is recording duty titles twice - once while deployed and once in garrison to distinguish

the separate roles. It is not uncommon for a captain with seven years time in service and four or more combat tours to completely fill their entire assignment history. While officer evaluations have a sordid history of inflation and have endured over 20 revisions, they remain the most important means to differentiate officers. Force ranking was added, removed and modified numerous times, yet cultural practice deflated the numerical stratification as Senior Raters failed to adhere to a rating profile that forced them to make hard choices of screening talent at the micro-level, instead pushing the difficult decisions to a macro-level selection board.

Figure 4 – (Officer Record Brief)

**OFFICER RECORD BRIEF** AR600-8-104 CMAAOF-81

ORB TYPE	BRIEF DATE	FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY	DESIG DATE	IN	COMPONENT	AD GRADE-ADOR	SSN	NAME
2900	20120113	SENIOR LEADER DEVELOPMENT	20000531	BR OTL/EXPRES	RA	LTCPC	20061201	

**SECTION I - Assignment Information**

OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT / COMBAT DUTY

20100624 HI 3P 1 L Short- 4 Long- 3

20090226 IZ 15 1 C DROS DEROS

20081115 IZ 12 1 C 20100624 NA

20040301 IZ 10 1 C

19970623 GM 15 1 C eMILPO Tour Data

19961207 BK 11 1 O CBT- 3 OPN- 1 RES- 0

Dwell Start 20080226

Dwell End 35Mo 1D

**SECTION II - Security Data**

INVEST 20110729 DTPSGD 2011

PD-HERVES-SSBI

**SECTION III - Service Data**

ASST 199512 C8 1991021

SSC Date of Apt FY1990

McDyez Alca 281

Cur Svc Agmt/Expr Date 20201101

2LT-WB1 1LT-CW2 CPT-CW3 MAJ-CW4

19890524 19920523 19940701 20010201

LTC-CW5 COL BG MG

20081201

LTG GEN

**SECTION IV - Personal/Family Data**

Date of Birth 19670913

Country of Cit US

No of Dependent Adults/Children 0103

Religion PROT-NO-DENOM

Marital Status MARRIED

Spouse Birthplace/Cit KENTUCKY/US

Pulver/Date 1111

Home of Record at Ead ILLINOIS

Mailing Address

**SECTION V - Military Education**

ESC ENROL

Course 5S SW

SR SVC COLL-SELECTEE 2009

CMD GEN STAFF COLLEGE 2000

JUMPMASTER 1998

CAS3 1995

INFANTRY MGCC 1994

MOTOR OFFICER 1994

RANGER CRS 1993

AIR ASSAULT 1992

INF MORTAR FLT OFF 1991

**SECTION VI - Awards**

LEVEL COMPLETED

INSTITUTION DISCIPLINE

KS, USA CGSC/FT LEAVENWORTH MMAAS D YR 2003

BSM- 3 ASUA- 1 HSM- 1 RGR- 1

MSM- 7 NSMA- 2 ASR- 1 SRPRCHTB- 7

JSCMA- 1 AFEM- 1 OSM- 1

ARCOM- 5 ICMS- 4 NATOMDL- 1

AAM- 4 GWOTE- 1 AIR ASLT- 1

JMUA- 1 GWOTS- 1 CIB- 1

VJUA- 1 AFSA- 1 EBN- 1

**SECTION VII - Civilian Education**

MASTERS

**SECTION VIII - Awards and Decorations**

1989

**SECTION IX - Assignment Information**

ASGT FROM MO UNIT NO ORGANIZATION STATION LOC COMD

20110527 17013

DUTY TITLE DMOS

Current 20110717 12 V 2HE JAWOC STU DET CARLISLE BARRACKS 1 PA TH SC FELLOW- YALE 1A020000

1st Prev 20100707 12 V 2ED FT KNOX 1 KY SE INFANTRY BRANCH CHIEF 1A020000

2nd Prev 20090707 11 0 00 G3/57 USARPAC FT SHAPE HI P1 TRAINING OFFICER 1A020000

3rd Prev 20090226 04 0 04 1-14 IN (STRYKER) SCHOFIELD HI P1 BN COMMANDER 1A020000

4th Prev 20071207 15 0 14 1-14 IN (STRYKER) TAJI IZ P1 BN COMMANDER (IRAQ) 1A020000

5th Prev 20070531 06 0 14 1-14 IN (STRYKER) SCHOFIELD HI P1 BN COMMANDER 1A020000

6th Prev 20070228 10 0 04 3-4 IN BDE FT CARSON 1 CO FC BCT XO (IRAQ) 1A020000

7th Prev 20060501 10 0 04 3-4 IN BDE BAQUBA IZ FC BCT XO (IRAQ) 1A020000

8th Prev 20051130 06 0 04 3-4 IN BDE BAQUBA IZ CT BCT S3 1A020000

9th Prev 20050216 06 0 04 3-4 IN BDE FT CARSON 5 CO FC BCT S3 1A020000

10th Prev 20041210 06 0 09 2-4 GAV SQUADRON FT CARSON 5 CO FC SCORP EXECUTIVE OFFICER 1A020000

11th Prev 20040606 06 0 12 1-12 IN BN (MECH) FT CARSON 5 CO FC BN EXECUTIVE OFFICER 1A020000

12th Prev 20040301 05 0 12 1-12 IN BN (MECH) FT CARSON 5 CO FC BATTALION S3 1A020000

13th Prev 20030618 10 0 12 1-12 IN BN (MECH) HAWAII IZ FC BATTALION S3 1A020000

14th Prev 20020502 02 V 5LS THE SCH BDE 11 FT BENNIN 1 GA TC REGIMENTAL DCO 1A020000

15th Prev 20010426 12 0 11 A CO 2-11 IN BN FT BENNIN 1 GA TC COMPANY COMMANDER 1A020000

16th Prev 19991230 10 0 75 HHC 75TH RANGER REGIMENT FT BENNIN 1 GA SP COMPANY COMMANDER 1A020000

17th Prev 19981121 13 0 75 75TH RANGER REGIMENT FT BENNIN 1 GA SP LIAISON OFFICER 1A020000

18th Prev 19970701 16 V 85W 101ST AIRBORNE DIV ALAMEDA 5 CA JA CNTR DRUG OPS OFFICER 1A020000

19th Prev 19970412 12 0 2008 101ST AIRBORNE DIV FRIEDBERG OM ES BATTALION ASST S3 1A020000

**SECTION X - Remarks**

5 Selected for Battalion Command?

**Photo**

5 Fat? Image representation?

5 Does he have a photo?

**Assignment Dates**

- Muddy Boots Time
- Meets KD minimum times
- Has continuity in jobs

**Assignment Organization**

- Muddy Boots Unit
- Deployed to Combat
- Familiar Units

**Assignment Duty**

- Muddy Boots Job
- Does the Hard Jobs
- Command & KD



## EXISTING EXPLANATIONS: LITERATURE ON MILITARY INNOVATION

Once it is fully established, bureaucracy is among those social structures, which are the hardest to destroy...and where bureaucratization of administration has been completely carried through, a form of power relation is established that is practically unshatterable.<sup>21</sup>

- Max Weber  
*Essays in Sociology*

History presents us with hard facts and immutable truths that military organizations change, however evaluating why, analyzing how and identifying who drives innovation, resembles uneven terrain among theorists. While academic definitions of innovation slightly differ over the last 25 years, they centrally agree that innovation is a “systematic and massive changes to the basic nature of warfare” and those who fight.<sup>22</sup> Conversely, academic theory does not agree on the three central questions regarding innovation. This study will review scholarly concepts by four academics to understand innovation and groups them into four categories based on their focus: vision, doctrine, practice and culture. Lastly, we will identify salient points within their literature as well as gaps.

We’ve established that organizational change can and will happen, however there’s great complexity in such an endeavor. Roots of the modern organization reach back to the industrial revolution as their architectural forms developed in response to the increased demands. Structure, clear lines of authority, narrow span of control and hierarchical distribution of power were means of control. The nature of its composition makes it resistant to change.

## **Vision**

Vision is the ability to promulgate an image of success resulting in a mental picture of the future. It provides a sense of expanded purpose, direction and motivation for its constituents. Vision is an understanding of the temporal environment as it relates to its current condition and the future. It's a matter of knowing where you are, where your threats are and where you want to be. The principle requires leaders to look forward and plan backwards.<sup>23</sup>

In *Winning the Next War*, Stephen Rosen's provides an intuitive and constructive approach to innovation by observing successful examples of innovation, rather than 'operational failures' to adapt. He delineates social behaviors between peacetime and wartime by noting that wartime military organizations are "in business" with an enemy. Their preoccupation makes change more problematic because war is the ultimate prioritization of effort. Thus, peacetime innovation, while slower in process, is easier and more permanent. Rosen's examinations of peacetime innovation include: amphibious warfare, carrier aviation and helicopter mobility infer a long temporal development that had lasting effects on how the military fights.<sup>24</sup>

Rosen's theory regarding why military organizations innovate is not as clear as his theory is for how they innovate. This is likely due to the intangible character of vision. He resists the notion of causality for innovation as a response to failure or to civilian control, but rather that it stems from those visionary leaders who analyze the need internally, then mobilize within their own organizations for change. The ever-changing security environment certainly obscures vision, however the notion of 'failure to imagine' lays heavily in American History on two infamous dates – December 7, 1941

and September 11, 2001. Rosen's assertion regarding how militaries innovate and the responsibility for innovation are mutually supporting. Analyzing the need for change and making change happen is done by and through the senior officers controlling the profession. "Power is won through influence over who is promoted to position of senior command...The organizational struggle that leads to innovation may thus require the creation of a new promotion pathway to the senior ranks, so that young officers learning and practicing the new way of war can rise to the top."

Rosen argues vision is a key variable for organizational change, and the innovation will have better permanence when it's gained internally through senior military leaders during peacetime. Accordingly, Rosen validates **Hypothesis 1** by supporting change through visionary leaders who analyze the need internally, and then advocates controlling promotions as a mechanism to force change. Each of the most recent Army Chiefs of Staff released strategic guidance attempting to drive change - indicating the Army was "out of balance," and it needed to "adapt leader development and manage talent."<sup>25</sup> If testing of **Hypothesis 1** is active and underway, then why hasn't change been implemented? Rosen acknowledges the protracted process may present skepticism but once change occurs - it will be more durable. Also of note, the condition of the U.S. Army is still in wartime, which Rosen explains has a polarizing priority of effort.

## **Doctrine**

Doctrine is a codified concise expression of military knowledge that serves as a unifying instruction of how military forces conduct war through tactics-operations-

strategy. While authoritative, it requires judgment in application. It facilitates communication among soldiers and contributes to a shared professional culture. It is rooted in time-tested principles but is forward-looking and adaptable to changing technologies, threats, and missions. Doctrine is detailed enough to guide operations, yet flexible enough to allow commanders to exercise initiative when dealing with specific tactical and operational situations. To be useful, doctrine must be well known and commonly understood.<sup>26</sup>

In *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, Barry Posen provides a principled and more pragmatic approach to innovation. While Rosen is resistant to credit military doctrine as a significant variable driving innovation, Posen asserts it as a central element to innovation. His supposition of doctrine is viewed by its higher-purpose to grand strategy. The definition that I've provided is more akin to practitioner's terms. Overall, his hypothesis is reactionary as is his explanation as to why militaries innovate: when the organization fails to meet its purpose, when they are pressured from outside, and when they want to expand. His comparative case studies of France, Britain and Germany explain doctrinal innovation during the interwar period. France's Maginot line is a time-honored example of poor assumptions placed into doctrinal practice, as well as his examination of Britain's poorly integrated military doctrine during the interwar period. Both case studies correlate to the lack of readiness during the on-set of war, which was a difficult lesson learned by the U.S. Army's Task Force Smith during Korean War, moreover this study's example of the U.S. Army's change post-Vietnam supports Posen's first assertion of change.<sup>27</sup>

While Posen's theory regarding why militaries innovate is clear, his explanation as to how and who is responsible differs from all other academics. Posen asserts that

innovation is a top-down intervention during peacetime and, ultimately, is a responsibility of outside civilian control since it's derived from grand strategy of the state. This observation is certainly consistent with his pragmatic approach, however he introduces the notion of a dynamic senior officer, termed a "Maverick", as a facilitator to the innovation. While not as clear, he suggests that according to organization theory, military doctrine shows a tendency to be "offensive, disintegrated and stagnant."<sup>28</sup> I find the latter supported by his case studies but inaccurate in the modern security environment.

Posen claims doctrine is a key variable for organizational change, and makes the case that innovation must be top-down driven from the outside in order to sustain better permanence. Posen's notion of doctrine as central element to innovation is consistent with **Hypothesis 2** as it relates to a "unifying instruction of how to" communicate; however Posen infers organizational change will not occur within the character of the U.S. Army. Consequently, Posen would rebut **Hypothesis 2** noting that doctrine alone is not enough to force change. Even if the Army implemented doctrinal control measures, the experimental gains of non-operational assignments would not have the same durable effect as an organizational failure that forced innovation. Lieutenant General Honoré once used a southern-colloquialism to explain this paradox on a separate topic, "One can pull on a willow tree and it will bend, but once you let go they snap back." Such is the case for Posen's theory for **Hypothesis 2**, when tested officers would amend career models to accommodate, but will not internalize the value, therefore any sequel, 2<sup>nd</sup> order effect, or future conflict would serve as an excuse to relapse.

## Practice

By application of performance-oriented repetition, skill is developed through iterative learning and behaviors are modified through measures of rewards and compliance. Professional discipline is gained through established quantitative/qualitative measure and criterion is specified for the expected levels of performance.<sup>29</sup>

Organizational Learning experts, Chris Argyris and Donald Schon, argue single-loop learning is associated with practice, in which an error is detected and corrected then enables the mission achievement.<sup>30</sup>

In *Innovation, Transformation, and War*, James Russell provides an insightful contemporary explanation for military innovation. Russell incorporates Posen's view that doctrine serves as a vital indicator of learning and innovation, however he derives a grass roots explanation for causality as its development of new organizational capacities that were not initially present. He asserts that military organizations do not innovate Top-down because they are change/risk averse and become too entrenched in behaviors. Their structure facilitates a loss of learning. Conversely, he asserts that innovation results from leaders seeking to improve battlefield performance as a reaction local circumstance, ultimately changing the ways they employ their organization. Similar to Posen, this hypothesis is reactionary as his conceptual framework of case studies focus on wartime innovation of Counter-Insurgency Doctrine in Iraq.<sup>31</sup>

Russell's theory regarding innovation appears more as a process of tactical adaptation. The provided definition of organizational practice aligns more closely to his theory of innovation than either Rosen or Posen. Russell clearly defines the innovation as a "bottom-up, iterative process of organically generated tactical adaptation that unfolded

over time” in a distinctive progression, and by the hands of organizational leaders. I find that Russell’s case studies do not account for the entire security environment in Iraq, nor does he account for the unit’s home station training. Other Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) did incorporate similar practices of modifying task organization for effects and reorganizing structure for efficiencies, but the enemy and environment must be accounted for as well. Notwithstanding, the technological evolution during this last decade of war was dramatic. A natural progression of military platforms is consistent with modernization, from light wheeled vehicles to Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, but the impressive harnessing of information through Human, Biometric and Signal Fusion and a flattened network of all source information was transformational.

Russell proposes iterative learning results through measures of rewards and compliance, but organizations will not innovate top-down because they are too entrenched in their behaviors. Russell asserts the practice feedback loop as a key variable for organizational change, but does not account for its permanence. His theory corroborates **Hypothesis 3** by supporting change through Promotion/Selection Practices as rewards or consequences for those who do/do not adapt career development models. In the same manner that Posen would challenge durability, Russell notes adaptation is best managed under wartime conditions because there’s a distinctive shorter link between the observer and decision maker. The entire process is enabled by a flattened hierarchical structure that is wholly different than the U.S. Army organization outside of theater.

## Culture

Anthropologists, sociologists and historians debate the meaning of the word *Culture*. A term that is hard to define because it's an abstract principle that shifts in identity with different peoples. For our purposes, culture is defined as a shared set of values, norms, traditions, symbols and beliefs. It is a derived identity that characterizes the higher order to which it belongs. It is that is dynamic in nature and transmitted to others.<sup>32</sup>

In *The Culture of Military Innovation*, Dima Adamsky provides an insightful and scholarly view of military innovation. Adamsky postulates that military organizations require a capacity to “recognize and exploit” innovation. He acknowledges that most military revolutions arise from technological advances, however the process does not fully transpire until change is adopted into the organizational structures and the deployment of force. Adamsky incorporates Rosen’s view on the “new theory of victory” by asserting the requirement for recognizing and understanding the discontinuity in the nature of war as causal to change. Current Army Doctrine for Mission Command cites this portion of theory as “See First, Understand First.” The theory of anticipatory leadership or ability to imagine is nested within the definition of vision. Innovation taking root as a formalized process in structure, doctrine and practice are common themes between Posen and Russell.<sup>33</sup>

Adamsky’s “cultural construction” approach as a context to explain why do/don’t military’s innovate is unified and clear. His most exceptional analysis is reserved for the conceptual framework of Strategic Culture. He suggests that certain cultural and cognitive characteristics of a professional community may have greater propensity than

others to grasp paradigmatic change in the nature of war. This argument factors variance and inclinations among cultures, noting that high or low context social structures determine top-down or bottom-up innovation. Observing the American strategic culture illustrates a normative image of an individualistic social structure with a low-context communication style and monochromatic orientation to time.<sup>34</sup> This is not dissimilar to the evolving strategic culture of the U.S. Army. Adamsky considers strategic culture responsible for innovation, which is particularly vexing for identification of the accountable party, although is in agreement with Rosen's theory of visionary leaders mobilizing within their own organizations.

Adamsky claims culture is the key variable for organizational change and he makes the case that opposing approaches can drive innovation. Strategic cultures have different capacities to recognize change; hence issues of durability and tempo are affected. Adamsky's theory is consistent with **Hypothesis 4** - when the need for change is internalized, the culture will adjust and integrate. Cultural acceptance leads to permanence in organizational change. Adamsky and Posen propose a central theory that organizational failure produces major cultural change, and the post-Vietnam Army produced the Muddy-boots culture. The underlying assumptions are the current Army culture has protected itself from another organizational failure over the last 40 years, so why change? Put differently, internalization does not occur without a forcing mechanism, hence **Hypothesis 4** is not testable when the organization does not recognize need for change. This logic would place the U.S. Army in arduous condition requiring change. Nevertheless, Adamsky would support the results of **Hypothesis 4** by acknowledging

cultural adjustments that incorporate developmental practices that that balance breadth and depth of experience.

### **Salient Theories Military Innovation Theory**

There's consensus that large organizational change is not easy, however discord regarding the process and responsible party. The nature of a bureaucracy creates a fortress-like defense mechanism that is resistant to collapse from changes in strategic leadership and the security environment. When disaggregating the variables from literature, variables of intelligence and technology are universally accepted as drivers for innovation. Likewise, doctrine and structure vary among the field as to whether they serve enough weight to drive an innovation, but both are noted as complementary to the process of innovation. Smaller variables, such as: Tactical Adaptation, Standard Operating Procedures, and Education, are all viewed as non-factors in causality but are noted as complementary to the process of innovation. There's considerable discord from the classical literature regarding the responsibility for change, however the common theme among the field is the importance of senior military officers as facilitators of change. As professionals within the profession, they possess the requisite credentials to drive their respective organizations to innovate. This is a salient theory among the field.

The last half-century of literature is overly focused on causality of innovation. In turn, their analysis on the process has notable shortcomings. We account for this as the literature attempts to answer a difficult question using opposing approaches. When observing innovation as a directional process, gaps in theory are evident, most notably development, culture and time. If the field were to observe organizational learning, it may

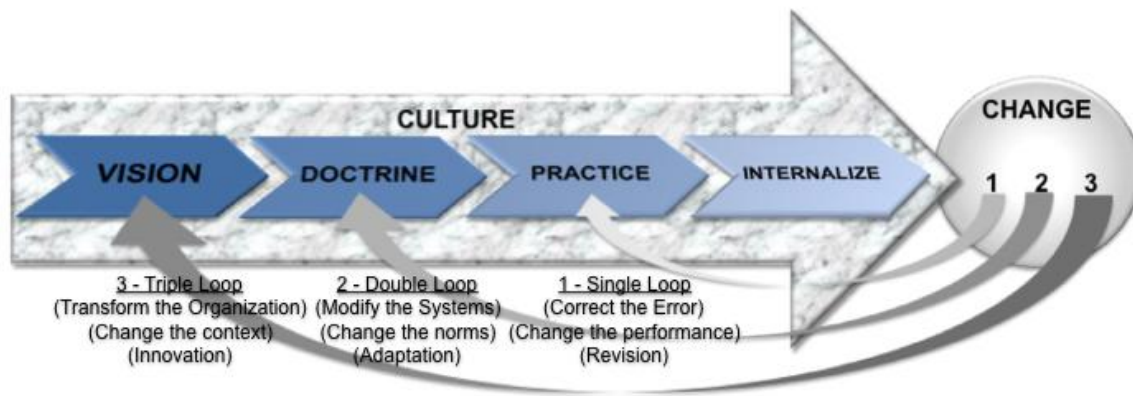
lessen the gaps. As noted above, a complementary approach provides a broader perspective when observing the process. For example, Dima Adamsky's cultural construction is an approach that the entire field could apply to their process hypotheses. Also, James Russell's iterative learning process would explain the expansion of single-loop learning from the bottom-up. Still, Rosen and Posen stand in opposite castles with regards to doctrine, but both agree that senior military leadership serves as facilitators to change. If the current field of analysis attempted to adjoin parts of their theory that are in many ways complementary, they may find the decision cycle expands.<sup>35</sup>

## **EMERGENT THEORY:**

### **Argument for Complementary Effects to Organizational Change**

Academic literature highlights the critical variables required for organizational change; these variables are: Vision, Doctrine, Practice and Culture. While the academic theories each possess a piece to the puzzle, they miss the heart of the solution. Their theories account for innovation when the institution's culture facilitates the need, but when the culture is threatened, its recourse is to protect itself. Likewise, the culture perpetuates by incorporating a system of protection through longevity of its selection and promotion practices. Arranging these variables in a logical sequence reinforces effectiveness by mutually supporting concepts, better yet, when viewing them in a decision cycle (Figure 6) for organizational learning they are complementary in nature and afford loops in learning – Revision, Adaptation, Innovation.

Figure 6 (Complementary Effects to Organizational Change)



This case study recognizes the critical variables that drive change in a military organization. It adds the process of internalization to facilitate understanding in the feedback loop, and asserts that large organizational change requires all variables to work in a complementary process to affect change. The feedback loops account for increasing change in performance, norms and/or context, in which the system of rewards enables internalization. This study found a universal definition for each variable and touched on issues that were central to the internalization process.

When arranged in a logical sequence: Vision serves as the ability to anticipate. It provides the expanded purpose, direction and motivation for the organization. Its design takes into account the organization, the threat and the security environment. Doctrine is the unifying instruction that serves as a reference for decision-making. Practice is performance-oriented repetition that develops skill through iterative learning. It provides measures of reward for compliance to gain organizational discipline. Culture is the shared

set of values, norms and traditions that identifies the organization. It is derived from the higher order to which it belongs. Internalize is to understand and to take in and make an integral part.

### **Analysis of the Research Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question: Why have career development practices for U.S. Army officers not been optimized to balance breadth and depth of experience despite wartime pressures and post-conflict drawdown? To best answer this question, four hypotheses were proposed and each nested in the most relevant theory of innovation and organizational change.

**Hypothesis 1:** If the Vision of Senior Military Leaders requires Army officer's to possess Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, Multinational experience, then officer's assignments will change to incorporate more Joint Officer Management experience as part of Joint Force 2020. Current evidence (Figure 3) indicates that the U.S. Army JIIM experience is anemic and below statutory requirements. More importantly, the senior military leadership has recognized the need for change, and they've directed a vision, which incorporates more JIIM experience. Rosen's theory is consistent with the method and responsibility to drive change, however it may not be enough. From Secretary Gates through three Army Chief of Staffs, the broadening imperative is consistent in their vision; however there's been no noticeable change in the promotion system to enforce compliance.

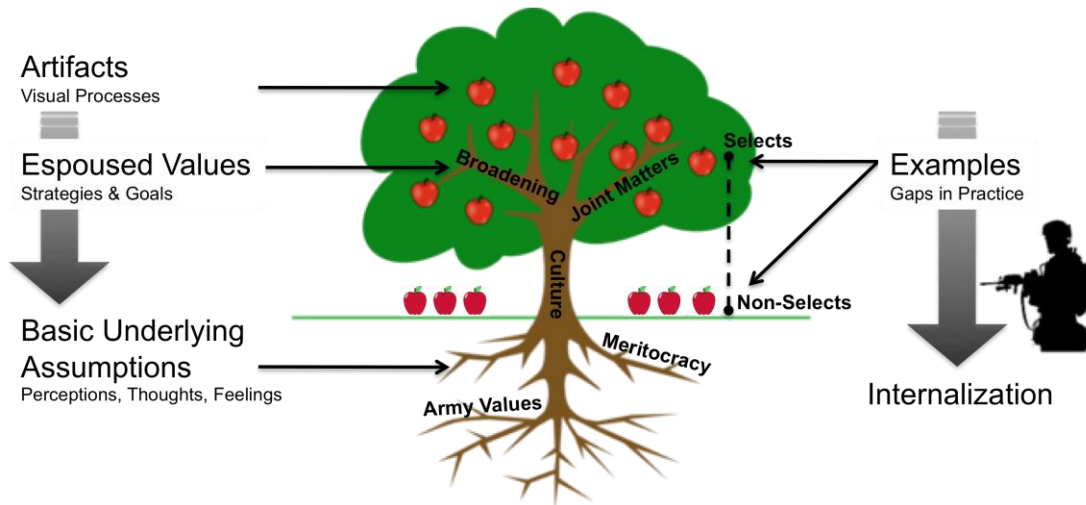
**Hypothesis 2:** If Army Doctrine prescribes broadening experience as a prerequisite for promotion then Army officers will adopt the experiential gains of non-operational assignments. Current Army Doctrine is focused on its core practice – Army

Force Generation. Institutional Adaptation produced a unifying methodology so that the Army could meet its mission requirements during wartime. The evidence shows the Army nearing a threshold of capability to source theater requirements – unit rotations were one to one (one year deployed and one year Reset and Train), individual deployments were high (average of 3 deployments per Soldier) and total months deployed (average of 32 months per soldier). Consequently, the Army adapted its doctrine to meet the needs of an insatiable wartime environment. Posen’s theory has a direct relationship to the key variable organizational change, however doctrine must be consistent for its durability and possess “teeth” or consequences for officers to adopt the change - otherwise it will be ignored. Currently, the US Army doctrine focuses on ARFORGEN as the Army’s core process and its key component of transformation. The Army’s doctrinal focus is to provide capable forces now to combatant commanders, rather than future strategic leaders.

**Hypothesis 3:** If Army officer boards changed their Promotion/Selection Practices to reward officers who met the espoused needs of the Army’s Strategic Leadership and Doctrine, then Army officers would adapt their career development to meet those needs. Evidence shows there’s gap between espoused and in-use Army practices. Army promotion and selection boards pick officers who resemble the composition of the board, specifically those officers who possess high in operational experience. Russell’s theory is mutually supporting to this hypothesis. The iterative learning comes through rewards and consequences. I’ve used a metaphoric visualization in Figure 7 to explain the observation process as theorized by Russell. E.H. Schein provides a simplistic conceptual model of organization culture - Artifacts, Espoused

Values and Basic Underlying Assumptions.<sup>36</sup> Each represents a different level of culture which are/are not visible to the observer. The key to practice is observing the gaps in practice.

Figure 7 (Observing the Gaps in Practices through 3 levels of Culture)



**Hypothesis 4:** If the Army officer corps internalizes the need for change, then the “Muddy-boots” Culture will adjust and integrate career developmental practices that balance breadth and depth of experience. Evidence shows that officer’s developmental models are “out of balance.” However, current wartime conditions prevent organizational change. Both Rosen and Adamsky note that war has a polarizing effect to priority of effort, consequently the officer corps will value the assignments in theater of higher value because of the unlimited liability within the Profession of Arms. As an infantry officer with multiple combat deployments, my own qualitative opinion justifies this notion, however this is not to discount the value of non-traditional assignments. Put differently, broadening assignments may have less importance than combat assignments but they should not be a detriment to an officer’s promotion. Balance is key and the current

developmental templates of battalion commanders and junior strategic leaders are, anything, but balanced.

### **Implications about Future Army Innovation**

Critics argue that the Army's lack of a talent management model led to the waning bench of strategic leaders. The growing discord stems from an inflexible personnel system that batches promotions by service time instead of competence, arbitrarily distributes assignments, and possesses an evaluation system that is neither evaluative or a systemic.<sup>37</sup> Dissension includes the core of middle grade officers, who noted there was "a gap in some espoused and in-use practices with in the Army Profession."<sup>38</sup> This gap is a recurring theme within the Profession of Arms.<sup>39</sup> In fact, it is the same language surveyed over 40 years ago by General Westmorland, and surveyed a decade ago by General Shinseki. Even over the last year, there has been critical feedback regarding the departure of Talent for the private sector due to a command structure that rewards conformism and ignores merit.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, how does the Army manage talent when its practice of selection is very narrow at the critical strategic gate of battalion command?

General Creighton Abrams often thought of the Soldier when the Army creates great forces of change. When counsel offered that company grade officers are idealistic, Abrams subtly replied, "Yes...and its our job to keep them that way." The counsel given to young officers who seek a successful career path is typically to stay with troops. The five assignments resemble a progression up a steep ridgeline – platoon leader, company commander, S3/XO, battalion commander, brigade commander. Yet, these five

assignments constitute 10 years of a 26-year career. What else is there for an officer to do? Doctrine should define broadening assignments at each grade plate, stratify those assignments, and then organize into a logical progression. This sequel planning reinvests the officer's experience into a larger headquarters and gives predictability to his family. Without doctrinal changes, officers will continue to develop narrowly and the Army will become challenged to conduct succession planning as its strategic bench erodes.

When reviewing the anatomy of a selection board, it becomes evident that some boards are better equipped for selection. For instance, the Colonel promotion board is a statutory board comprised of 17 General Officers, in which the board president is a Lieutenant General with a panel of 16 General Officers. The panel must be representative of Joint Duty, previous BCT Command, and demographics.<sup>41</sup> This board considers nearly 3000 officers over period of 14 days, which creates a workload of 200-250 files per day, and reviewing files for 10 hours per day gives a board member 2-3 minutes per officer file. In that small window of time the board member reviews an officer's Officer Record Brief (ORB), Picture, and OERs, then determines a numerical standing of the officer relative to his peer group. Consider this panel is composed of very senior leaders who've written evaluations for lieutenant colonels and colonels, plus possess depth in broadening assignments. It is clear that this board is well suited in composition for the zone of consideration. Conversely, when reviewing the same metrics for a policy board, such as the Lieutenant Colonel Command/Key Billet Board, the panel is comprised of only one General Officer and the rest are Colonels. The experiential composition is considerably less. In fact, the broadening experience of a Colonel is the same as a Lieutenant Colonel. This is considerable, with selection rates at 30%, battalion command is the Army's first

arduous board. The same problems persist for another policy board, SSC Board, and the size of the zone it must consider nearly doubles exceeding 5000 files as the zone of consideration may span six YGs, which creates an unyielding workload. If the Army continues this practice for selection boards, it may be decide the fate of a million-plus dollar investment that took 16 years to build in the period of 3 minutes.<sup>42</sup>

### **Implications about Future Innovation in General**

The theory of Complementary Effects to Organizational Change has applicability to any large organization that's developed a cultural rewards system that inhibits its ability to change. There are two very public instances of cultural conflict – economics and schools. The recent departures of Goldman Sach's Executive Greg Smith and New York City School's Chancellor Joel Klein were highlight by their frustration with their organization's culture. Each worked laboriously to make a major innovation within their organizations, and even though each succeeded in smaller adaptations, their organizational cultures eventually outlasted them. In comparison of these quotes, you can see the difficulty each is having within their respective culture:

I am sad to say that I look around today and see virtually no trace of the culture that made me love working for this firm for many years. I no longer have the pride, or the belief.<sup>43</sup>

Greg Smith

More broadly, we need to foster a fundamental shift from a top-down, one-size-fits-all culture—mandated class-size reduction, after-school programs, and the like—to a culture that supports innovation. In New York City, we set out to change these preexisting dynamics by allowing educators and community groups—rather than the central bureaucracy—to design and run new schools to replace the failing ones.<sup>44</sup>

Joel Klein

## **A BRIDGING STRATEGY: SMALL FIXES TO AFFECT LARGE CHANGE**

This research proposes a short-term bridging strategy comprised of six fixes enabling organizational momentum to close the cleavage between espoused and in-use practices and the innovation of a Talent Management System to yield an investment in a bench of strategic leaders.

The ORB needs to regain its résumé form. It should display the officer's depth of experience in the Army and overtly display any special skills that are important to the Army. With minimal assistance, a CEO of a Fortune 500 Company should be able to read the ORB. There is considerable difference between the Army biographies, and those of our civilian counterparts. This will provide better interoperability for the officer in broadening assignments.

Avoid grade-plate pooling by having junior YGs ballast senior YGs evaluations, the Army should institute force ranking annually within their respective YGs vice grade-plates. As the officer grows, so should his ranking, which provides a clear point of reference each year. BCTs should conduct the comparative analysis within their command, and then selection boards can conduct the analysis across the Army.

Reduce large rating profiles. BCT Commanders have too large of a profile to manage. It is important to reduce their span of control for evaluations. Adding block checks back to captain's evaluations will increase magnitude, and non-company commanders become bill payers. Realign the rating chains for a trade-off. For example, Deputy Commanding Generals (DCGs) at the Division-level should senior rate BCT S3/XO KD assignments, especially if they are promotable. The DCGs have a better

perspective for comparative analysis across the relative BCTs, and this truly adds weight to the evaluations.

Change composition of the Lieutenant Colonel Policy boards (Command and SSC). They should reflect the same statutory requirements as the Colonels Promotion board. Except for the board president, the membership of those Policy Boards lacks requisite experience to discern talent. Moreover they are inundated with files that are not competitive for selection. Select the best talent early by having the strategic leaders picking at the strategic gate and reduce number of officers in the board frame. Ensuring that the board is comprised of officers with broadening experience is a good way to increase the value of broadening.

Increase anonymity to the board. A method to reduce mirror-effect bias is to remove or “mask” names on evaluations and remove pictures. This could be done by only displaying page 2 (backside) of the OER, or replace all names with social security numbers. With 2-3 minutes per file, little time is spent on the first page of the OER, except to see the name/rank of the senior rater and height and weight of officer. The Army’s Senior Leaders should review the demographic results of the board. It becomes tautology when leaders attribute trends to the boards, especially when they comprise the collective membership.

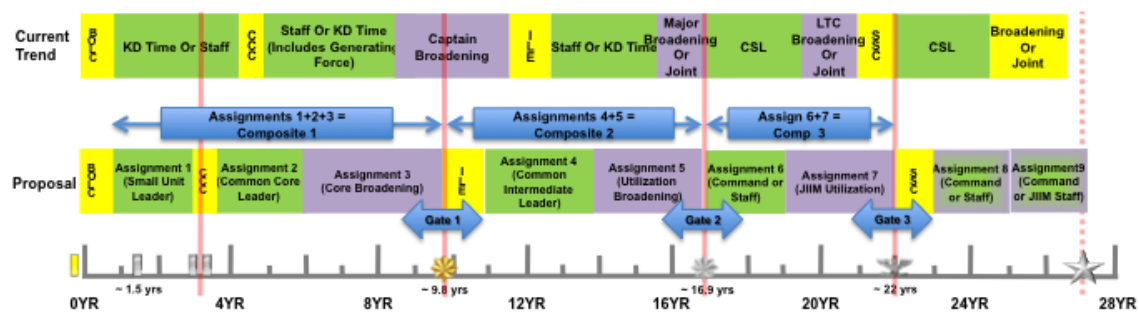
Compliance management by reporting developmental time. The Army Manning Guidance needs compliance management. For example, as the lack of PME attendance created backlogs at ILE and SSC, the Army Chief of Staff (CSA) directed promotion to LTC will not be awarded without graduation from ILE and would personally adjudicate slating for brigade command for those officers who do not attend SSC.<sup>45</sup> A simple

measure to ensure BCT Commanders are managing officer's developmental time effectively is to require monthly reporting on the Unit Status Reports (USR). BCT Commanders are held accountable for the readiness of their equipment, why not for their officer's developmental time. It is a finite resource.

## LONG TERM STRATEGY: COMPOSITE ASSIGNMENTS AND A TALENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

This study suggests alternatives to officer development models. These concepts can be adopted as complementary to the short short-term bridging strategy. In Figure 8, the objective is to drive the current trend of declining developmental time windows back into a requirements-based assignment cycle. The composite assignment cycles ensures officers do not proceed through promotion gates until they've met both core and broadening assignments. This concept provides a holistic view of the officer in both tactical and broadening perspectives. The gated approach provides benefits to predictability for the officer and his Family.

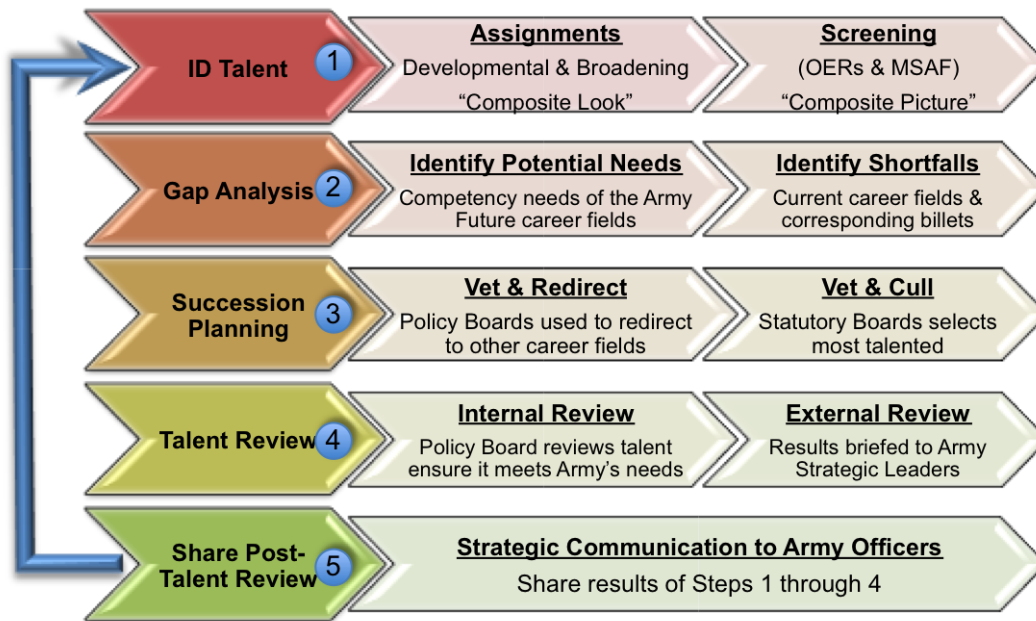
Figure 8 (Composite Assignments)



## **Creating a Meritocracy in the Profession of Arms**

Large organizations are constrained for the resources of time, structure and budget. Member's merits may be obscured by the sheer size of the competition. Classifying today's OPMS as a meritocracy is inaccurate. The system was transformed to meet the Army's needs of growth and readiness for operational requirements. Doctrine, Practice and Culture are contributing factors to its current condition. In order to continue to refine, the fixes must be applied to all three critical components. Transitioning to Talent Management System is a Strategic Level Problem. There are more steps in the process than "Screen, Vet, and Cull."<sup>46</sup> While all three are functional imperatives, the Army needs to adopt the practice of Succession Management and Sharing Talent Selection in an open dialog with its collective membership. The Army has the basic requirements for discerning talent, but it needs to arrange a complementary framework to create a system of talent management. A Creative Metrics White Paper frames a simple line of thought: *"Although succession management is one of the most long-term and strategic investments an organization can make, it doesn't have to be one of the most complicated."*<sup>47</sup> Following this line of thought, the Army could modify existing procedures and incorporate the 5-step model for Strategic Talent Management (Figure 7).

Figure 9 (Strategic Talent Management)



## Conclusion

The Army modified its personnel practices to meet the persistent demands of war. The constraints of manpower and time stressed the institution as a whole and its modification of existing practices led to pathologies that we must now face. While the muddy-boots culture is a long-standing trend, its intensified parochialism affects the way we select future leaders, thus causing a deeper cleavage between espoused and in-use practices. Downsizing is only one of the certain changes the Army must manage as it is challenged to create a credible Meritocracy. The Army needs to adopt a system of talent management.

With the magnitude of change imminent, and the selection practices are narrow, the Army will continue to select its future leaders on culturally valued criteria from its last conflict. This Nation's decisive force possesses unmatched lethal capacity; however

its capacity to build relationships within the future Joint Force 2020 requires experience in Joint, Inter-Agency, Inter-Governmental and Multi-National assignments. These broadening experiences should be the culturally valued criteria for the next conflict.<sup>48</sup>

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Josiah Bunting, *The Lionheads*, New York: Braziller, 1972. Print. 16. A novel about a fictional Infantry Division in Vietnam that reveals issues with command climate. The story centers around a proficient, but ambitious General who refuses to support his brigade commander with much-needed helicopter support and for reason to prevent the Secretary of the Army to discover the failure of the Riverine Concept. The book is full of conflicting culture, doctrine and decision-making.

<sup>2</sup> Russell Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, New York: Macmillan, 1967. Print. 558. Weigley asserts evidence of striking rapid decline of the Army after Vietnam by referencing the 124 articles in the Military Review: The Professional Journal of the US Army. Only 13 focused on Vietnam, counterinsurgency or guerrilla war, and the remainders were military problems of NATO or World War II.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Study on Military Professionalism (Westmoreland Study), 1970, United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. June. The Army War College findings shocked the Army's leadership – there was a clear gap between espoused and in-use practices. Junior officers noted that Senior officers were not living up to the professional standards espoused in Duty, Honor, Country. Instead, as Lewis Sorely's biography of Westmoreland points out, the system rewarded selfishness, incompetence, dishonesty, and all of these were internal critiques from the officer corps.

<sup>5</sup> GEN Raymond T. Odierno, "Marching Orders" January 2012, *United States Army Homepage Online*, <http://usarmy.vo.llnwd.net/e2/c/downloads/234187.pdf> (accessed February 8, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Spencer Ackerman. "Gates (Delicately) Criticizes the All-Volunteer Military" September 2010, *Wired.com*. Web. 10 Apr. 2012.  
<<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/09/gates-delicately-criticizes-the-all-volunteer-military/>>.

<sup>7</sup> GEN Raymond T. Odierno, "CSA remarks at the U.S. Army's Institute of Land Warfare winter Symposium and Exposition." *United States Army Homepage Online*, [http://www.army.mil/article/74452/Regional\\_unit\\_alignments\\_could\\_match\\_brigades\\_with\\_combatant\\_commanders/](http://www.army.mil/article/74452/Regional_unit_alignments_could_match_brigades_with_combatant_commanders/) (accessed February 25, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> David McCormick, *"The Downsized Warrior,"* New York: University Press, 1998. Print. 170.

<sup>9</sup> "2011 Profession of Arms Survey." *CAPE Home*. Web. 17 Jan. 2012.  
<<http://cape.army.mil/ProfessionOfArmsSurvey.html>>.

<sup>10</sup> Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, "United States Military Academy (West Point) As Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, West Point, NY, Friday, February 25, 2011," Defense.gov transcript, February 25, 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1539> (accessed August 26, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, "2009 Army Posture Statement," *United States Army Homepage Online*, [http://www.army.mil/aps/09/information\\_papers/institutional\\_adaptation.html](http://www.army.mil/aps/09/information_papers/institutional_adaptation.html) (accessed February 28, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Accelerated promotion windows enabled officers to pin-on rank 6 to 12 months earlier and promotion rates elevated 20-30% higher than the 1980 Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOMPA, 1980) established zones. With promotion Rates to Major and Lieutenant Colonel exceeding 95%, typical non-selects were those not in keeping with Army values.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, DA PAM 600-3, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, February 1, 2010), defines Developmental as "all officer positions are developmental" and "Broadening experience are assignments outside the officer's core branch or functional area."

<sup>14</sup> The Army was structurally growing more majors and faster, yet its seats available to educate did not change. As theater requirements grew, operational deferments for Senior Service College rose 200% in 10 years.

<sup>15</sup> The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 changed personal management of military officers. Officers were required to progress through levels of Joint Professional Military

Education and, routinely, serve in Joint Duty positions as part of their career development. Service compliance is briefed to Congress, annually. An officer must meet these requirements or they are not considered eligible for promotion to General/Flag officer. While surveying all 428 General Officer Biographies, Infantry and Armor composed nearly one-third of the body or 129 General Officers. Of the 129 Infantry and Armor General Officers, over 45% completed their first Joint Assignment as a Colonel. Additionally, most of their Joint experience was in Combat Theater Structure and the average Joint Service in months for COL-Promotable was 23 months.

<sup>16</sup> Data from the United States Army Human Resources Command, OPMD-MFE-I.

<sup>17</sup> United States Code, Title X, Section 661, *Office of the Law Revision Counsel*. Web. <<http://uscode.house.gov/>>. This statutory requirement states that the Secretary of Defense will ensure that one-half (50%) of Joint Duty Authorized List (JDAL) positions in the grade of major and above are filled to ensure Joint Matters.

<sup>18</sup> Data from the United States Army Human Resources Command, OPMD-MFE-Joint Policy Desk.

<sup>19</sup> Data from the United States Army Human Resources Command, OPMD-MFE-I.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Max Webber, *Essays in Sociology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. Electronic Book. 196.

<sup>22</sup> Williamson Murray and Allan Millett, *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, Cambridge: Cambridge, 1996. Print. ix, 300.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Army War College. Department of Command, Leadership and Management, *Strategic Leader Primer*, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/dclm/slp3.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2012)

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military*, Ithaca: Cornell, 1991. Print.

<sup>25</sup> GEN Raymond Odierno, 38<sup>th</sup> Army Chief of Staff, *38th CSA Initial Guidance*, United States Army, September 11, 2011. In this brief General Odierno identifies 9 Focus Areas, to which includes "Adapt Leader Development to meet future challenges."

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Operations*, Field Manual 3-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, February 2008, D-1.

<sup>27</sup> Barry Posen, *"The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars,"* Ithaca: Cornell, 1984. Print

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Training*, Field Manual 7 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, December 2008), G-3.

<sup>30</sup> Chris Argyris and Donald Schon, *"Organizational Learning: A Theory-Action Perspective,"* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978. 4.

<sup>31</sup> James Russell, *"Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa, Iraq, 2005-2007,"* Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies, 2011. Electronic Book.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Northouse, *"Leadership: Theory and Practice,"* Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010. Print. 335.

<sup>33</sup> Dima Adamsky, *"The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel."* Stanford, CA: Stanford, 2010. Print.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Mission Command*, Field Manual 6 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 2011), G-3.

<sup>36</sup> E.H. Schein. *Organizational Culture and Leadership: Second Edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. During the course of research, a different visualization was found by James G. Pierce's dissertation, *Organizational Culture and Professionalism: An Assessment of the Professional Culture of the U.S. Army Senior Level Officer Corps, 2004*. Pierce provides an insightful and well research proposal.

<sup>37</sup> Tim Kane. "Why Our Best Officers are Leaving." *The Atlantic*, January/February 2011.

<sup>38</sup> 2011 Profession of Arms Survey.

<sup>39</sup> Westmoreland Study on Professionalism.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Tilghman. "The Army's Other Crisis: Why the Best and Brightest Young Officers are Leaving." *The Washington Monthly*, December 2007: 44,53. Transcriptions, CQ. "July 21, 2011 -- Senate Armed Services Committee holds confirmation hearing on nominations." *United States Army*. July 21, 2011.

<http://www.army.mil/article/62076/> (accessed September 17, 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Department of the Army. 2011. Memorandum, *FY12 Officer and Enlisted Board Membership Requirements Tasking Matrices*. Washington, DC: Department of the Army, Office the Chief of Staff, G-1, August.

<sup>42</sup> The average cost of a college education is \$200,000. The pay and entitlement averages exceed \$880,000 over 16 years. Added costs for training, movement and education are contributing factors.

<sup>43</sup> Greg Smith. "Why I Am Leaving Goldman Sachs." *The New York Times*. nytimes.com, 14 March 2012. Web. 10 April 2012.  
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/opinion/why-i-am-leaving-goldman-sachs.html>>

<sup>44</sup> Joel Klein. "The Failure of American Schools." *The Atlantic*. Magazine – The Atlantic, June 2011. Web. 10 April 2012.  
<<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/06/the-failure-of-american-schools/8497>>

<sup>45</sup> Broadening assignments, or as current culture refers "take-a-knee" assignments, are culturally conflicting. Officers are taught to exemplify leader attributes by enduring with their soldiers. The distinction of commanding soldiers, above all, in combat, is the most revered duty and any staff assignment outside of "muddy-boots" is not of noble-merit and will put an officer at-risk for promotion.

<sup>46</sup> Casey Wardynski, David S. Lyle and Michael J. Colarusso. *Talent: Implications for a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> Creative Metrics, Inc., "Creative Metrics Succession Cycle." Web. 2011.  
< <http://www.creativemetrics.com/factsheets/succession-management-cycle.pdf>>  
(accessed 2 February 2012).

<sup>48</sup> GEN Raymond T. Odierno, "Marching Orders" January 2012.